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and converted into a lithoxyle, we look upon it as carbonized and converted into the substance above named, into which calcareous matter has entered by infiltration, and filled up the fissures formed by the decomposition of some parts, and the shrinking of the fibres, with sulphuret of iron here and there disseminated. A single glance at its cross fracture shows that its vertical layers are not calcareous. It was probably carbonized in some of the coal fields, with which that region abounds, and then swept into the river, where it now lies, and afterwards filled up with the calcareous matter which now constitutes so large a part of it, and enveloped in the alluvial sand of the river. Calcareous lithoxyles are exceedingly rare ; in fact we know of none, unless some of the petrifications observed by Riche, Peron, and Le Sueur in their voyage to the *terres australes*, may be so considered. These are our conjectures—they may be wrong, and it looks somewhat like vanity, we confess, to sit here in our attic, and presume to know what is done on the Illinois, better than those who have been on the spot to examine.

ART. XII.—*The Spy, a tale of the Neutral Ground. By the author of Precaution.* 2 vols. 8vo. pp. 537. New York, 1821.

WE have long been of opinion that our native country opens to the adventurous novel-writer a wide, untrodden field, replete with new matter admirably adapted to the purposes of fiction. Our views on this subject have already been partially developed, (N. A. Rev. No. 31.) and our conviction has not been staggered by any arguments we have heard opposed to them. That nothing of the kind has hitherto been accomplished, is but a poor argument at best—especially when taken in connexion with the fact, that nothing has as yet been attempted. We are told, it is true, that there is among us a cold uniformity and sobriety of character ; a sad reality and utility in our manners and institutions ; that our citizens are a downright, plain-dealing, inflexible, matter-of-fact sort of people ; in short, that our country and its inhabitants are equally and utterly destitute of all sorts of romantic association. We are not so foolhardy as to deny the truth of the theory on which

these objections rest. It is not enough that solitary exceptions may be found here and there, if there be in fact great general uniformity pervading the mass of the people. The characters of fiction should be descriptive of classes, and not of individuals, or they will seem to want the touch of nature, and fail in that dramatic interest which results from a familiarity with the feelings and passions portrayed, and a consciousness of their truth. Admitting then, that the power of creating interest in a work of fiction, so far as it arises from development of character, lies in this generalizing principle which substitutes classes for individuals, we are triumphantly asked whether that state of society is not best fitted to the end proposed, in which this system of classification is already carried to its greatest extent;—where order rises above order in the most distinct and uniform gradation,—each pinnacle standing aloof from its neighbor, each separated by its own impenetrable barrier. No—certainly not; if by these distinctions are meant the mere formal divisions of society into lords, gentlemen, and villains. It is not such artificial and arbitrary distinctions which give the greatest possible variety and scope to character, or effect that kind of classification which is best adapted to the wants of the author. On the contrary, they are so many impediments in his way, forcing character out of its natural development into constrained and formal fashions, if such principles were left to their own tendency, they would make all men so many flat-headed Indians; and when the causes of these unnatural distinctions in human character had ceased to exist, we should look round in vain for the model of the dull and uniform monsters they had created. Not so where men have sprung up in active and adventurous communities, unshackled by forms, unfashioned by governments, and left freely to work out their own way, pursuing their own objects, with nothing to interrupt or affect them, but that mutual attrition which has not always the effect of polishing in the moral, as in the physical world. When therefore we are told that the country whose society contains the most abundant distinction of classes is the chosen fairy land of poetry and romance, and that America can never be such because it contains none, we are instinctively brought to remember a certain forensic maxim, which may be of use before more than one species of tribunal, namely, where the law is against you, always deny the fact. Now we

do most seriously deny, that there is any such fatal uniformity of character among us, as is herein above supposed ;—we deny (bating the formidable division into king, lords, and commons,) that there is not in this country a distinction of classes precisely similar in kind, and of extent nearly equal to that which exists in Great Britain ; nay, we boldly insist, that in no one country on the face of the globe can there be found a greater variety of specific character, than is at this moment developed in these United States of America. Do any of our readers look out of New-England and doubt it ? Did any one of them ever cross the Potomac, or even the Hudson, and not feel himself surrounded by a different race of men ? Is there any assimilation of character between the highminded, vain-glorious Virginian, living on his plantation in baronial state, an autocrat among his slaves, a nobleman among his peers, and the active, enterprizing, moneygetting merchant of the East, who spends his days in bustling activity among men and ships, and his nights in sober calculations over his ledger and day-book ? Is the Connecticut pedlar, who travels over mountain and moor by the side of his little red wagon and half-starved pony, to the utmost bounds of civilization, vending his '*notions*' at the very ends of the earth, the same animal with the long shaggy boatman '*clear from Kentuck,*' who wafts him on his way over the Mississippi, or the Ohio ? Is there nothing of the Dutch burgomaster yet sleeping in the blood of his descendants ; no trace of the prim settler of Pennsylvania in her rectangular cities and trim farms ? Are all the remnants of her ancient puritanism swept out of the corners of New England ? Is there no bold peculiarity in the white savage who roams over the remote hunting tracts of the West ; and none in the red native of the wilderness that crosses him in his path ? It would be hard indeed out of such materials, so infinitely diversified, (not to descend to the minuter distinctions which exist in each section of the country) which, similar in kind but far less various, have in other countries been wrought successfully into every form of the popular and domestic tale, at once amusing and instructive, if nothing can be fabricated on this degenerate soil.

But where are your materials for the higher order of fictitious composition ? What have you of the heroic and the magnificent ? Here are no '*gorgeous palaces and cloud capped towers* ;' no monuments of Gothic pride, mouldering

in solitary grandeur; no mysterious hiding places to cover deeds of darkness from the light of the broad sun; no cloistered walls, which the sound of woe can never pierce; no ravages of desolating conquests; no traces of the slow and wasteful hand of time. You look over the face of a fair country, and it tells you no tale of days that are gone by. You see cultivated farms, and neat villages, and populous towns, full of health, and labor, and happiness. You tread your streets without fear of the midnight assassin, and you perceive nothing in their quiet and orderly inhabitants, to remind you of misery and crime. How are you to get over this familiarity of things, yet fresh in their newest gloss? You go to your mighty lakes, your vast cataracts, your stupendous mountains, and your measureless forests. Here indeed you find nature in her wildest and most magnificent attire. But these boundless solitudes are not the haunts of fierce banditti; you have never peopled these woods and waters with imaginary beings; they are connected with no legendary tales of hoary antiquity;—but you cast your eye through the vista of two short centuries, and you see them as they now are, and you see nothing beyond. Where then are the romantic associations, which are to plunge your reader, in spite of reason and common sense, into the depths of imaginary woe and wonder?

If we are asked with reference to the good old fashioned romance, and are required to construct a second castle of Otranto, to amaze our reader with mysteries, like those of the far famed Udolpho, or harrow up his young blood with another Fatal Revenge, we answer, that in our humble judgment, it matters little in regard to these mere creations of the brain, in what earthly region the visionary agents are supposed to reside; the moon, for aught we know, it has been elsewhere said, may be as eligible a theatre of action, as any on this earth. Not that we would speak disparagingly of the wildest creations of romance, or have it thought that we are less affected than others, by those masterly efforts of a bold imagination, left to luxuriate in its own ideal world. But we are not ambitious that scenes so purely imaginary, should be *located* on this side of the Atlantic, when they cannot from their very nature, partake any thing of the character of the soil and climate which give them birth; although we are by no means sure that a first rate horror, of the most imaginative kind, might not be invented without the aid of Gothic architecture, or

Italian scenery.—While for these reasons, which do not peculiarly affect ourselves, we have no particular longing after this species of American castle building, we do hope to see the day, when that more commodious structure, the modern historical romance, shall be erected in all its native elegance and strength on American soil, and of materials exclusively our own. The truth is, there never was a nation whose history, studied with that view, affords better or more abundant matter of romantic interest than ours. When you ask us how we are to get over the newness and quietude of every thing among us, your question points only at the present time—a thing in itself utterly destructive of romance in all quarters of the globe. What should we think of a historical romance, for instance, in which the duke of Wellington should win the battle of Waterloo, and the marquis of Londonderry be made the secretary of state for foreign affairs? And yet if their noble lordships should meet with any different fortune or fate, however excellent the plot, however spirited and well sustained the characters, who would not throw down the book with a *quodcunque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi*? Since then the præterperfect is our only romantic tense, we reply, a little paradoxically perhaps, go back to the days when things were newer—but not so quiet as they now are. It is no new principle in the laws of imagination, that remoteness in point of time attaches romantic associations to objects which have them not in themselves—and these, so soon as they are created, become heightened by contrast. A ruin is a romantic object, only because it carries you perforce into remote antiquity, and suggests on its very front the moated castle with all its battlements and towers standing in proud proportion, a stately pile that seemed to bid defiance to the ravages of time and storm. You look at an elegant modern edifice, with a stack of chimneys for its minarets, and a smiling cornfield for its court yard, and it suggests nothing of itself, but the unromantic notion of peace and comfort, which are reigning within. Go back then to the day when its walls were slumbering in their native quarry, and its timbers flourishing in the living oak; when the cultivated farm was a howling wilderness, the abode of savages and outlaws, and nothing was to be seen in its borders but rapine and bloodshed. Imagine some stern enthusiast, voluntarily flying the blandishments of more luxurious abodes

—or some accomplished courtier, driven from the scene of his ambition and intrigues—or some gallant soldier wearied of the gay capital, and panting anew for adventure and renown, fearlessly marching with his chosen band into these dreary and dangerous solitudes ; follow him through the perils and difficulties he surmounts, and witness the long struggle of civilization, encroaching on the dominion of barbarism ; and you will then find that romantic associations may become attached even to this familiar spot. Neither need we revert to any very remote period of antiquity to rid us of this familiarity, which forever plays about present things with a mischievous tendency to convert the romantic into the ludicrous. It is astonishing what changes are effected in manners, customs, names, and outward appearances, in the course of a single human generation ; and when we look at the days of the fathers of the oldest now living, how little do we see that we recognize, how much that we wonder at ! Not the least pleasing, perhaps, of the many admirable productions of the great master of romance in modern times, refer to a period hardly so remote as that of which we speak ; and yet no one, not even they who live on the very spot, which is represented as the theatre of great and romantic action, complains of the familiarity of those scenes.

There seem to be three great epochs in American history, which are peculiarly well fitted for historical romance ;—the times just succeeding the first settlement—theæra of the Indian wars, which lie scattered along a considerable period—and the revolution. Each of these events, all pregnant with interest in themselves, will furnish the fictitious historian with every variety of character and incident, which the dullest imagination could desire or the most inventive deserve. What is there for instance in the rebellions and wars of the Scotch covenanters, to compare with the fortunes of those sterner puritans, who did *not* rise in arms against their prince ; but who, with a boldness of adventure, under which the spirit of chivalry itself would have quailed, leaving behind them all that is most dear to men on earth, the companions of their youth, the graves of their fathers, the home of their hearts, crossed a trackless ocean ; fixed their habitations on an unknown and inhospitable shore ; not for the visit of a day, not cherishing a latent hope of future return, when they should have amassed wealth, or acquired fame, to raise them in the estimation of their coun-

trymen ; but with the humble hope and firm resolve to expend their lives and their children's lives in the wilderness, for the sake of worshipping their God after the fashion of their own hearts. The situation and character of these men, who 'had they been as free from all sins as gluttony and drunkenness,' (so says one of their quaint historians) 'might have been canonized for saints,' are in the highest degree picturesque ; and moreover afford a singular contrast to those of Raleigh's successors in the south, headed by that man of adventure, who had challenged a whole Ottoman army in his youth, carrying off the heads of three Turkish champions at his saddle-bow, and who was now solacing his riper years, amidst the cares of a colonial government, in the arms of the renowned Pocahontas. The gloomy but sustaining spirit of fanaticism in these, who had fled to the wilderness for conscience' sake ; the disappointed avarice of those who had come to it for silver and gold ; the stern ecclesiastical oligarchy first established in the east ; the worldly time-serving despotism of Smith and the succeeding governors in the south ; the one punishing with banishment and death 'that damnable heresie of affirming justification by works ;' the other promulgating in the new world the laws of the old 'to prevent sectarie infection' from creeping into the pale of mother church ; the former denouncing temporal punishment and eternal wrath, against 'all idlers, common coasters, unprofitable fowlers, and tobacco takers ;' the latter formally enacting and literally executing that salutary law, that 'he who will not work shall not eat ;' the Virginian colony importing into the country a cargo of negroes, to entail the curse of slavery on their remotest posterity, in the same year that our first fathers were founding the liberties of America on the Plymouth rock, and Winthrop with his company of sturdy Independents, extending along the shores of Massachusetts the work which had been so happily begun, while 'refiners, goldsmiths, and jewellers,' 'poor gentlemen, tradesmen, serving men, libertines, and *such like*, ten times more fit to spoil a commonwealth, than either to begin or maintain one,' as the old writers inform us, were still flocking over to the shores of Virginia. Such contrasts judiciously exhibited, as, notwithstanding the distance of the two colonies, they well might be, with no very unpardonable poetical license, especially by the link of the New Netherlands, while they supply at once an infinite variety of individual character to the

author's hands, could not fail to confer on a work of fiction the additional value of developing the political history of the times, and the first beginnings, perhaps, of those conflicting sectional interests, which sometimes perplex us at the present day. Or if more rigid rules of composition require us to confine our views to the colony of Massachusetts Bay, for instance, what character could be more obsequious to the imagination than that of the moody and mysterious Blaxton? who who was found by the colonists, the solitary lord of the little isthmus of Shawmut,* which he claimed and was allowed to hold against them, by the acknowledged right of established possession; of whom history only tells us that he had been a clergyman of the church of England, that he dissented equally from her canons, and those of his non-conforming brethren; but how or when he emigrated to America, and built his humble hut on a spot destined to become the seat of a populous and flourishing city, it tells us not. What shall we say to Sir Christopher, the knight of Jerusalem, a lineal descendant of the famous bishop of Winchester, who with the strange lady was travelling and revelling through the land, until he was stopped by the scandalized 'seekers of the Lord,' and arraigned on a charge of suspicion of bigamy, *et alia enormia contra pacem*, before such a judicial assembly as the politic Winthrop, the scholastic Cotton, the fiery and intolerant Dudley, with Underhill perhaps for a witness, and Miles Standish for captain of the guard? What would not the author of *Waverley* make of such materials? But we forbear to enlarge further on this prolific theme.

The Indian wars, of which the first occurred soon after the time of which we have just spoken, and the last of any note in New England, in the years 1722-25, are fruitful of incidents, which might, to great advantage, be interwoven with the materials before noticed; and it scarcely needs to be asserted, that the Indians themselves are a highly poetical people. Gradually receding before the tread of civilization, and taking from it only the principle of destruction, they seem to be fast wasting to utter dissolution; and we shall one day look upon their history, with such emotions of curiosity and wonder, as those with which we now survey the immense mounds and heaps of ruin in the interior of our continent, so extensive that they have hardly yet been measured, so ancient that they lie

* The Indian name of the peninsula on which Boston now stands.
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buried in their own dust and covered with the growth of a thousand years, forcing upon the imagination the appalling thought of some great and flourishing, perhaps civilized people, who have been so utterly swept from the face of the earth, that they have not left even a traditionary name behind them. At the present day, enough is known of our aborigines to afford the ground-work of invention, enough is concealed to leave full play for the warmest imagination; and we see not why those superstitions of theirs, which have filled inanimate nature with a new order of spiritual beings, may not be successfully employed to supersede the worn out fables of Runic mythology, and light up a new train of glowing visions, at the touch of some future wizard of the West. At any rate we are confident that the savage warrior, who was not less beautiful and bold in his figurative diction, than in his attitude of death, the same who 'suffered not the grass to grow upon the war-path,' and hastened 'to extinguish the fire of his enemy with blood,' tracking his foe through the pathless forest, with instinctive sagacity, by the fallen leaf, the crushed moss, or the bent blade, patiently enduring cold, hunger, and watchfulness, while he crouched in the night-grass like the tiger expecting his prey, and finally springing on the unsuspecting victim with that war-whoop, which struck terror to the heart of the boldest planter of New England in her early day, is no mean instrument of the sublime and terrible of human agency. And if we may credit the flattering pictures of their best historian, the indefatigable Heckewelder, not a little of softer interest might be extracted from their domestic life.

Instead of wearying our reader with a formal disquisition on the characters and scenes of the third epoch, we beg leave to introduce him, without farther ceremony, if he has not already made the acquaintance, to Mr Harvey Birch, better known by the name of the Spy of the Neutral Ground; whom we greet, as doubtless the reader does also, with the greater satisfaction, in that he has taken a world of trouble off our hands, doing away the painful necessity of establishing by syllogism and inference this part of our proposition, viz, that the American revolution is an admirable basis, on which to found fictions of the highest order of romantic interest. This trouble is taken off our hands, however, not because the work before us is a perfect model of its kind, but because, whatever other deficiencies or deformities may appertain to it, want of interest, the only unpardonable sin of romance, is not among them.

We do not propose, however, to give a minute analysis of a work, which has already been some months before the public, and has withal sufficient notoriety to have reached its third edition. We have a right to assume, that our readers are fashionable enough to have kept pace with their neighbors, and shall therefore tell no more of the story, than we find necessary for our purpose.

The narrative turns on the fortunes of Henry Wharton, a captain in the royal army, (then under sir Henry Clinton, with head quarters at New York) who imprudently visits his father's family at West Chester, (the neutral ground,) in disguise, and there falls into the hands of an American party under the command of Major Dunwoodie, his sister's betrothed lover, and his own bosom friend. He is tried and condemned as a spy; but succeeds in making his escape by the assistance of Harvey Birch, the pedlar, himself a notorious British spy, and with the connivance of Washington, who, under the assumed character of Harper, had been an inmate at the house of Wharton's father, at the time of the stolen visit, and was firmly convinced of the young man's innocent intentions.

Harvey Birch, by whose mysterious agency every important incident in the book is more or less affected, though a convicted spy of the enemy, with a price set upon his head, turns out in the sequel to have been all along in secret the confidential and trusty agent of Washington.

This finely conceived character, on whom the interest of the narrative mainly depends, is not wholly without historical foundation. It is matter of notoriety, that no military commander ever availed himself of a judicious system of *espionage* with more consummate address, or greater advantage to his cause, than General Washington. The similarity of the belligerents in all outward appearances, and their community of language, furnished both parties with great facilities for mutual deception. But the minute local knowledge of our commander in chief, his extensive information in regard to the manners, habits, and occupations of the persons with whom he had to deal, his own acute observation and discriminating judgment, united to an intimate acquaintance with the characters of individuals, gave him in this respect peculiar advantages, which he never failed to improve. A fund, liberal, considering the parsimony and extreme poverty of our government, at that

time, was furnished by congress, expressly to be employed in secret services of this nature, and Washington was never sparing of his own purse when occasion demanded additional supplies. Hence he was enabled to maintain great numbers of secret agents, who were often at work unsuspected in the very heart of the British army, transmitting regular and authentic intelligence of its minutest operations; while his most confidential officers were profoundly ignorant of the means and sources of his information, and frequently received themselves that, on which they were directed to rely, without knowing the quarter whence it came. We do not state this without authority. We have it through a channel, which ought not to be doubted, that, at a time when General Heath was left by Washington in command, he was directed to make daily search in the hollow of a certain tree for despatches from the enemy's camp; and the search was seldom fruitless, though the general professed himself entirely unsuspecting of the person or persons by whom he was thus supplied. Many similar facts are probably known to officers now living; and-although others, who stood high in the service, should not possess the same kind of information, this is a species of negative evidence, which can weigh little in the scale. That services of this sort should have been performed by persons commonly reputed to be disaffected to the American cause, and even by those who lived ostensibly in British pay, is a thing not only extremely probable in itself, but likewise a fact capable of being established by living testimony. Indeed we have, within these few days, held direct communication with a man then in this city, who, having first suffered his name to be stricken off the rolls of his regiment for desertion, entered into the service of sir Henry Clinton, as a private, and sir Henry thought confidential agent, while he was, in truth, a spy upon the movements of that officer, and constantly conveyed all his valuable information to the commander of the American armies, in conformity with the understanding that subsisted between them; and this was a man of sufficient respectability to receive a captain's commission for his services.* It may well, however, be a matter of doubt, whether

* This man had a secret pass from Washington, to be used in case of emergency. He was accustomed to carry his despatches rolled up, in shape and size like a bullet, that they might be swallowed, if necessary. Once, when employed by sir Henry, as the bearer of a despatch to sir Guy Carleton in Canada, he met a brother tory, charged with despatches, *vice versa*, from sir

General Washington himself ever submitted to a personal disguise for the purpose of obtaining this kind of information, either directly or indirectly; and, until we see undoubted evidence of the fact, we shall not hesitate to deny it. The whole character of Washington is against it. His station, his trust, than which none could be higher, are against it. The opinion of those most intimate with him, by their official relations, is entirely against it. Nay, it was almost physically impossible. His remarkable stature and physiognomy, his lofty carriage, the unbending dignity of his whole demeanor, and, above all, the notoriety of his person making detection almost certain, rendered him the most unfit of all men to practise such a deception. We are compelled to believe, therefore, that our author has deviated from historical accuracy, in a point where he should most scrupulously have adhered to it. When such a personage as Washington is made to move in the scenes of fiction, so recently too after the termination of his conspicuous career, he should appear, if he would appear safely, only as his countrymen have known and must ever remember him, at the head of armies, or in the dignity of state. Our imagination will hardly consent to follow him through the mere common courtesies, or grosser familiarities of life; and where our author attempts so to represent him, he undertakes a task, under which greater and more practised abilities would sink. In his own words, 'it was rash—it was unkind—it was a sad, sad mistake.' Reminding him, therefore of the old rule, '*sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, æquam viribus,*' we will proceed to business.

The scene opens abruptly, in the year 1780, with a solitary traveller, muffled in his cloak, and mounted on a warlike steed, who is seen by the startled dames and peasants of West Chester riding through one of its valleys, towards the edge of an October evening, in quest of shelter from the approaching storm. After being dismissed from the door of a miserable hovel, the residence of Harvey Birch, by a sharp-voiced,

Guy. These he contrived to get into his possession, by pretending that he himself was then on his way to sir Henry, and immediately carried the two to Washington. 'This,' said he, 'was the only time I ever saw his excellency smile,' although he often had private interviews with him. He went to see General Washington the day before he resigned the presidency, and the general, not unmindful of former services, then presented him with a hundred dollars.

meagre-visaged female, who informs him through the crack of the door, that she is 'only a forlorn, lone body, and does not much like to give lodgings to strangers in these ticklish times,' he proceeds through the driving rain to a house in the neighborhood with something more of elegance about it, and we are forthwith introduced to the family of the Whartons. After the first and second set of 'complimentary greetings' are happily over, Mr Wharton, 'who by his manner, dress, and every thing around him showed he had seen much of life and of the best society, hands a glass of excellent Madeira to his guest, inquiring with a *formal bow*, to whose health have I the honor of drinking?' The traveller, who sat unconsciously *gazing on the fire*, 'turning his eyes slowly on his host, with a look of close observation, replied, *bowing in his turn*, while a faint tinge gathered on his pale features, Mr Harper. Mr Harper, resumed the other, with the formal precision of the day, I have the honor to drink your health, and hope you will sustain no injury from the rain, to which you have been exposed. Mr Harper bowed in silence to the compliment, and soon resumed the *meditations*, from which he appeared to have been interrupted.' We are thus particular in noticing this highly complimentary scene, because it is the first instance of a fault very frequent with our author, and here the more unfortunate, as occurring so early, and so hard upon the heels of an extremely spirited introduction. We mean the great stiffness and inelegance, relieved by a little vulgarity, of his high life. This is rather a serious charge, and as we have no opinion of sweeping remarks, we shall proceed to establish it by, we trust, well supported illustration. The almost insuperable difficulty of representing Washington, *en famille*, we have already noticed; but that Harper is Washington the reader has as yet no ground to suspect; he comes to us a stranger, whom we look upon without 'fear, favor, or affection,' and expect merely that he will conduct himself like any other gentleman of graceful and dignified deportment, under similar circumstances. But, contrary to all this, the moment Mr Harper appears, wrapped in his cloak and mounted on his stately courser, we are tacitly informed that a prodigiously great man is getting under weigh. While he continues muffled, and in the saddle, he supports this character tolerably well; but no sooner do we meet him in the parlor, with the other high-bred gentlemen and ladies, than we perceive at once the author has got more dignity upon

his hands than he knows how to manage ; and accordingly it is starched up with stiff bows, awkward courtesies, and glum looks. All reasonable allowance doubtless should be made for a laudable attempt to exhibit ' the formal precision of the day ;' but really there is so little in the above scene said, or done very different from similar ' complimentary greetings' in modern days, that it is hardly more worthy of notice than ' the extra handkerchief' and ' blue surtout,' of which we are told, with great solemnity, Mr Harper had disrobed himself on his entrance.

Nor are we altogether satisfied with the easy abstraction in which Mr Harper settles himself down to contemplate the fire, and commune with his own meditations, when he ought to have been making his intrusion as little disagreeable as possible to the good people he had disturbed. These certainly were not the manners of Washington ! There is something however really ludicrous about the mock dignity with which this Mr Harper constantly makes a low bow, and says nothing ' for fear of committing himself,' and the formality with which we are told, this common place remark he made '*with his usual gravity*' p. 8. that, '*crossing his leg with steady composure,*' p. 9. &c. This holds with regard to Harper throughout ; and is in a greater or less degree applicable to all our author's heroes when they leave off action, and begin to talk ; because he thinks it necessary to stiffen their backs with an extra share of dignity and military etiquette. Thus Dunwoodie, ' the elegant and graceful Peyton Dunwoodie,' who is designed for a model of high breeding, after a pretty little love scene with Frances, full of touches of nature and true feeling, as soon as he comes to an interview with Henry, his prisoner, draws himself up like an old drill sergeant in a muster of raw recruits. That there should be a little awkwardness at first, between the captor and the captured, under such circumstances, is natural enough ; but there is no earthly reason why two warm hearted young men, who had spent their days of childhood in sweet communion together, who had grown up in habits of the strictest intimacy, who loved each other like brothers, and were in fact in a fair way to become so, should *sir* and *major* each other up, (when it was usually simple Peyton and Henry,) in a family conversation, as if they were upon parade, merely because duty required the one to examine into the motives and circumstances of his friend's disguise, while the other well knew that he

was under no sort of obligation to answer the inquiries, though very properly made. We had noticed several instances of the recurrence of this fault in the character of Dunwoodie, but our limits oblige us to omit them.

We have also said there is an occasional dash of vulgarity and grossness, among those who are introduced to us as men of a very different stamp. Lawton, for instance, who with something of Bothwell, and a smack of Dalghetty, rising but a single degree above either, is one of the best drawn characters in the book, a fearless trooper, who eats, drinks, and fights *con amore*, by some strange mistake comes in with the pretensions of 'a gentleman,' and is seriously spoken of by the author as such, pp. 70. 245 ; yet one of the first things he does when he gets into a gentleman's house, (its inmates utter strangers to him,) and is asked when Major Dunwoodie may be expected, is to fix his eyes upon Frances, and '*look droll*' at Mr Wharton. And when he and his officers, 'all of them men who under the rough exterior of actual and arduous service *concealed the manners of the highest classes of society*,' p. 72, are seated at the breakfast table, they not only eat with a most inelegant voracity all that is set before them, but seem to amuse themselves—very genteelly—with endeavoring to disconcert their timid host, by shrewd questions, sharp looks, significant smiles, and '*dry*' remarks, together with sundry threats of making his neighbor Birch dangle before his door 'from one of the limbs of his own namesakes.' p. 71—4. All we have to say to these finished gentlemen is, that they certainly succeed admirably in *concealing* 'the manners of the highest classes of society'—according to our poor notion of what those manners may be. It may really be worth our author's while, to contrast these high bred officers of his, seated around Mr Wharton's breakfast table, with Evandale, Claverhouse, and even sergeant Bothwell, at a *dejeuné* in the castle of Tillietudlem.—We will not fatigue our readers with multiplying examples of this kind, which lie scattered throughout the book. We cannot, however, but refer to the dining scene, towards the end of the first volume.

The scene in which the pedlar, after young Wharton's arrival, is ushered into the parlor, with all his vendibles, and the conversation which follows, are admirable. The gradual development of character—the cunning of the pedlar—his avarice, assumed to mask his real purposes—his affected indifference on political subjects—the skill and caution

with which he eludes the inquiries put to him—the effect on the purchases of the young ladies, who were of opposite parties in politics, as they draw different conclusions from his guarded answers—the eagerness with which young Wharton thrusts his head from behind the curtain, when he hears of Sumpter's defeat, and asks for more news, and the confusion with which he slinks back again when the pedlar, like a true yankee, replies by *asking* with peculiar emphasis, whether he had heard that André was hung;—the emotion of the father, who from beginning with an attempt to mend a broken tea-cup, ends with crushing the pieces of china in his hand—the boldness which he musters up at last to inquire whether they are like to be disturbed by the enemy—his dismay on being answered by the inquiry who do you call the enemy?—the quietude of Harper, sitting as if he were a disinterested auditor, throughout the whole—and the exquisite humor of the negro, 'the old family house servant, who, born and reared in the dwelling of his master, identified himself with those whom it was his lot to serve,' a character which we have never before seen truly depicted,—make it altogether a rich display of comic power, which we should certainly present to our readers at length, had we not yet better matter in store for them.

The battle scene, the escape, flight, and recapture of Henry Wharton—the chase of the pedlar-spy, and the overthrow of Lawton, are all described with great animation and spirit. We have no fault to find with either of them, except that the battle is planned with a little too much of military precision, and drawn too much into detail in the execution.

The next important scene we could not refuse our readers the pleasure of perusing, for the great variety of excellence it contains, but that we could not do it justice without a larger extract than our limits allow. We certainly esteem it the best in the first volume, and one which will redeem many subjects of censure.—In the hut of the mysterious pedlar lived an aged and infirm father, his sole surviving relative, and Katy Haines, his housekeeper, the same who introduced herself to the reader in the first chapter by repelling the applications of Harper for admittance in so uncourteous a way. The old man was lying at the point of death, and Cæsar had been despatched by his mistress to the hut with some restoratives which proved of little avail.

The curiosity of the spinster and the negro is excited to as-

certain whether the dying man had made 'his last will in the testament,' for which purpose they enter upon a laborious investigation of the record of births, deaths, &c., in the first page of the old family bible; but when they had spelt their way to the record of some awful visitation of providence, a deep groan from the apartment of the sick fairly frightens them into closing the volume. In the next instant they are startled by the entrance of the pedlar himself, who had come to receive the dying benediction of his parent; and this is interrupted by the arrival of the skinnners, (outlaws of the time,) who, after extorting from Birch his hidden treasures, on the promise that he should then be allowed to go to his father, are on the point of violating their faith by seizing his person, when the old man, looking like a newly risen corpse, totters into the room, and puts them to the rout with the full persuasion that they had seen a ghost, or according to the African Dutch of Cæsar, 'a spookie.'—Every part of it is admirably wrought.

So far every thing has gone on swimmingly. The machinery of the plot is in excellent train. All the parties who are, or ought to be, interested in each other, by a series of natural, and for the most part striking incidents, have been brought under the same roof. The love seems to be working well;—the mystery that hangs over the pedlar thickens at every step;—and the fate of Henry Wharton is a strong concentrating point of growing interest, to which we look forward with doubt and anxiety. The characters, various and spirited in conception, have been well sustained;—we have had little superfluity; no unnecessary make-weights; no more of the insipid than was just necessary for nature's dead-coloring;—no boarding school sentimentality; no out-heroding of Herod; nothing absolutely shocking to the taste or revolting to the feelings. In this prosperous state of things, borne on with swelling sails 'in the full tide of successful experiment,' our author, with that unaccountable perversity with which young men will sometimes indulge a whim—a freak—a folly—against all sober judgment, does not merely stop short in his bright career, and fall into a profound slumber—we could forgive him that—does not move on more drowsily, or meander a little in his path from ignorance of the way, or a slight bewilderment of his senses—we could forgive that too—but suddenly, with his eyes open, and without any manner of provocation, wheels off at a right angle, and

walks entirely out of a plain road, to bring in for no conceivable purpose but to create confusion, the least agreeable of all disagreeable 'bundles of sensibilities' we ever remember to have met with in print—or out of it. However 'a wilfu' man maun have his way ;' and accordingly he ushers in Miss Isabella Singleton, in a one horse chaise, with a dragoon escort and blackey to drive. This is brought about by causing her brother to be dangerously wounded, and carried to Mr Wharton's house ; in consequence of which the sister is sent for by Dunwoodie, after a little struggle with his own delicacy, because she was so unhappy as to have fallen in love with him, while on the other hand neither he nor any other mortal living, could possibly feel the like passion for her. The young lady is chiefly remarkable for an eye 'large, full, black, piercing, and at times a *little wild*,' together with great versatility of countenance, which she displays on every promising occasion. For instance, as soon as she learns that her brother is *out* of danger, 'she clasps her hands with energy,' 'rolls up her dark eyes to heaven,' 'a slight flush beams on her features,' and 'she gives vent to her feelings in a flood of tears.' Frances is seized with a sort of sympathy ; she first contemplates her with a kind of 'uneasy admiration !' She then 'springs to her side with the ardor of a sister,' and 'kindly drawing her arm in her own, leads the way to a retired room, where they can cry it out. 'Miss Peyton followed the youthful pair with only a smile of complacency. The feeling was communicated to all the spectators, and'—what think you did they ?—why, like sensible people,—'they dispersed in pursuit of their usual avocations !'—We shall follow their example, taking no farther notice of the sensitive Isabella, than that she continues to exhibit a very changeable countenance, and a great variety of emotion ; contrives to excite the jealousy of Frances ; occasions a temporary dismissal of Dunwoodie ; and performs many other unheard of achievements, until one day a lucky bullet, which was designed for Lawton, makes a very indelicate entrance into the bosom of Miss Singleton, and so she dies as ridiculously as she had lived, happily ridding the author and the reader of a very disagreeable impediment to the progress of the story.

The funeral of the elder Birch is a solemn, well conducted scene ; and the land speculator of the times who had contrived to cheat the pedlar in a bargain for the house, which now that his father was dead he was about to leave forever ; the

parting between Harvey and Katy, which was beginning to grow so tender on the side of the latter, when it is interrupted by the arrival of the Skinners; their capture of the pedlar, and burning of his house after it had become the property of the speculator; the description of the quarters of the dragoons at the 'Hotel Flanagan,' together with Betty Flanagan herself; the examination, imprisonment, and miraculous escape of the pedlar-spy, and more than all, the military theology of sergeant Hollister, where he humanely counsels his captive to make his thoughts ready to pass muster at the last review, are all well conceived and happily executed.

But we must give our readers a taste of Mrs Flanagan and the sergeant, at a time when they were proceeding, in obedience to a mysterious warning from the pedlar, to carry succor to Lawton, who was supposed to be in some imminent peril.

"As it is quite uncertain whether we shall be attacked in front or rear," said Hollister, "five of you shall march in advance, and the remainder shall cover our retreat towards the barrack, should we be pressed. 'Tis an awful moment to a man of little learning, Elizabeth, to command in such a service; for my part, I wish devoutly that one of the the officers was here, but my trust is in the Lord."

"Pooh! man, away wid yee," said the washerwoman, who had got herself comfortably seated, "the divil a bit of an inimy is there near—march on hurry-scurry, and lit the mare trot, or it's but little that Captain Jack will thank yee for the help."

"Although unlearned in matters of communicating with spirits, or laying the dead, Mrs Flanagan," said the veteran, "I have not served through the old war, and five years in this, not to know how to guard the baggage. Doesn't Washington always cover the baggage? I am not to be told my duty by a camp follower. Fall in as you are ordered, and dress."

"Well, march any way," cried the impatient washerwoman; "the black is there already, and it's tardy the captain will think yee."

"Are you sure that it was really a black man that brought the order?" said the sergeant, dropping in between the platoons, where he could converse with Betty, and was equally at hand to lead either way.

"Nay, said the washerwoman, "and I'm sure of nothing, dear. But why dont the boys prick their horses, and jog a trot; the mare is mighty uneasy, and it's no warm in this cursed valley, riding as much like a funeral party as old rags is to continental."

“Fairly and softly, aye, and prudently, Mrs Flanagan,” said the veteran; “it’s not rashness that makes the good officer. If it is a spirit that we have to encounter, it’s more than likely that he’ll make his attack by surprise;—horses are not very powerful in the dark, and I have a character to lose, good woman.”

“Caractur!” echoed Betty, “and is’nt it caractur and life too, that Captain Jack has to lose?”

“Halt!” cried the sergeant; “what is that lurking near the foot of the rock, on the left?”

“Sure it’s nothing,” said the uneasy washerwoman, “unless it be the matter of Captain Jack’s sowl that’s come to haunt yee, for not being brisker on the march.”

“Betty, ’tis foolishness to talk in such a way. Advance one of you and reconnoitre the spot—draw swords!—rear rank close to the front!”

“Pshaw!” shouted Betty, “is it a big fool or a big coward that yee are?—jist wheel from the road, boys, and I’ll shove the mare down upon it in the twinkling of an eye—and it’s no ghost that I fear.”

By this time, one of the men had returned, and declared there was nothing to prevent their advancing, and the party continued their march, but with great deliberation and caution.

“Courage and prudence are the jewels of a soldier, Mrs Flanagan,” said the sergeant; “and without one, the other may be said to be good for nothing.”

“Prudence without courage,” cried the other, “is it *that*, you mane?—and it’s so that I’m thinking myself, sargeant. This baste pulls tight on the reins, any way.”

“Be patient, good woman—hark! what is that?” said Hollister, pricking up his ears at the report of Wellmere’s pistol; “I’ll swear ’tis a pistol, and one from our regiment.—Hark! rear rank close to the front!—Mrs. Flanagan, I must leave you.” So saying, having recovered all his faculties, by hearing a martial sound that he understood, he placed himself at the head of his men with an air of military pride, that the darkness prevented the washerwoman from beholding. A volley of musketry now rattled in the night wind, and the sergeant exclaimed—

“March—quick time!”

The next instant the trampling of a horse was heard coming up the road, at a rate that announced a matter of life or death, and Hollister again halted his party, and rode a short distance in front himself to meet the rider.

“Stand!—who goes there?” shouted Hollister, in the full tones of manly resolution.

“Ha! Hollister, is it you?” cried Lawton, “ever ready and at your post; but where is the guard?”

“At hand, sir, and ready to follow you through thick and thin,” said the veteran, relieved at once from his responsibility, and now eager to be led against his enemy.

“‘Tis well,” said the trooper, riding up to his men; and speaking a few words of encouragement, he led them down the valley at a rate but little less rapid than his approach. The miserable horse of the sutler was soon distanced, and Betty thus thrown out in the chase, turned to the side of the road, and observed—

“There—it’s no difficulty to tell that Captain Jack is wid’em any way; and it’s the funeral that’s soon over now; and away they go like so many nagur boys at a husking-frolick;—well, I’ll jist hitch the mare to this bit of a fence, and a walk down and see the sport, afoot—it’s no rasonable to expose the baste to be hurted.”

The burning of the old mansion, with the rescue of Frances by Lawton, and of Sarah in a state of insanity by the pedlar, are told with some interest. But the moving ball of black which alarms Hollister in his midnight watch over the smoking ruins, and which turns out to be the royal chaplain in his robes, skulking about for fear of the Indians, is a poor conceit enough.

The trial of Captain Wharton, though detailed with rather too much form, and paying but a poor compliment to the acuteness of the learned judges in the art of cross-examination, is yet upon the whole well done; and there is not a little of real pathos in the wild supplications of Frances, and the violent emotions of Col. Singleton, when the recent death of his daughter is suggested to him by the agonized girl. It is the only atonement made for the Singleton episode in the whole book.

Wharton’s escape is a very clumsy contrivance. To suppose that vigilant sentinels in broad day, should mistake a man in a black mask for a real negro, is making rather a larger draught upon our faith, than we can answer in this part of the country. The chase, however, is a scene of breathless interest, excellently well told. But we cannot sufficiently admire at the idle stage-effect of making Wharton and the pedlar exhibit themselves upon the cliff they had gained, to their baffled pursuers, merely because the *horses* of the latter could not climb the precipice. We regret that our limits will not allow us to extract the whole of this scene, which, with the exceptions above mentioned is extremely good. We will not refuse them, however, the following energetic and eloquent

passage. It is just before the escape of the prisoner is discovered. Wharton, in the guise of Cæsar, is riding behind the supposed clergyman, (Harvey Birch) who turns his head occasionally under pretence of giving ghostly counsel to his humble follower, but in reality to watch the first indications of discovery and pursuit.

‘Do you see any thing in particular?’ asks Wharton.

“Humph!” ejaculated the pedlar; “there is something particular indeed, to be seen behind the thicket on our left—turn your head a little, and you may see and profit by it too.”

Henry eagerly seized this permission to look aside, and the blood curdled to his heart as he observed that they were passing a gallows that unquestionably had been erected for his own execution:—he turned his face from the sight in undisguised horror.

“There is a warning to be prudent in that bit of wood,” said the pedlar, in the sententious manner that he often adopted.

“It is a terrific sight, indeed!” cried Henry, for a moment veiling his eyes with his hand, as if to drive a vision from before him.

‘The pedlar moved his body partly around, and spoke with energetic but gloomy bitterness—“and yet, Captain Wharton, you see it where the setting sun shines full upon you; the air you breathe is clear, and fresh from the hills before you. Every step that you take, leaves that hated gallows behind, and every dark hollow, and every shapeless rock in the mountains, offers you a hiding place from the vengeance of your enemies. But I have seen the gibbet raised, when no place of refuge offered. Twice have I been buried in dungeons, where, fettered and in chains, I have passed nights in torture, looking forward to the morning’s dawn that was to light me to a death of infamy. The sweat has started from limbs that seemed already drained of their moisture, and if I ventured to the hole that admitted air though grates of iron, to look out upon the smiles of nature, which God has bestowed for the meanest of his creatures, the gibbet has glared before my eyes like an evil conscience, harrowing the soul of a dying man. Four times have I been in their power, besides this last; but—twice—twice—did I think that my hour had come. It is hard to die at the best, Captain Wharton; but to spend your last moments alone and unpitied, to know that none near you so much as think of the fate that is to you the closing of all that is earthly; to think, that in a few hours, you are to be led from the gloom, which, as you dwell on what follows, becomes dear to you, to the face of day, and there to meet all eyes upon you, as if you were a wild beast; and to lose sight of every

thing amidst the jeers and scoffs of your fellow-creatures—That, Captain Wharton, that indeed is to die.’

Soon after this comes a digression little less obnoxious than that which made us acquainted with the remarkable life, sufferings, and death of Isabella Singleton. We refer to the strange expedition of Frances Wharton, alone in a dark night through the midst of soldiers and villains, to the mysterious hut on the mountain, upon the vague notion of finding the pedlar, who might direct her to Harper, who she supposed would influence Washington to save the life of her brother who had already escaped, but who, to be sure, might possibly be recaptured. and then if he ever should come to the gallows, it would be highly convenient to have a pardon on hand.

The part which Harper, that is, Washington himself, is here made to play—holding secret and familiar communications with one of his meanest agents in such a spot, skulking upon the approach of Wharton into a recess of the rock—and finally emerging, after his departure, to inform Frances, that *if* she can but detain the cavalry two hours, her brother will be safe, and after giving her a long solemn blessing, concluding with ‘any of these sheep-paths will take you to the place,’ is far worse than the dull dignity with which he was stigmatized in the early scenes. The only real object seems to have been to furnish a pretext for the hasty marriage of Frances to Dunwoodie—a loss of time, by the way, which was rather inconsistent with the fiery zeal of the hero to pursue and overtake his fugitive friend.

There is one following scene of greater power, perhaps, than any our author has produced. It reminds us strongly, from the feeling of unmixed horror it excites, of the drowning of Morris in *Rob Roy*, although we do not mean to compare them in point of style.

—‘On the brow of the eminence stood a deserted and dilapidated building, that had been a barn. Many of the boards that had formed its covering were torn from their places, and its wide doors were lying the one in front of the building and the other half way down the precipice, whither the wind had cast it. Entering this desolate spot, the refugee officer very coolly took from his pocket a short pipe, whose color might once have been white, but which now, from long use, had acquired not only the hue but the gloss of ebony, a tobacco-box, and a small roll of leather that con-

tained steel, flint, and tinder. With this apparatus, he soon furnished his mouth with a companion, that habit had long rendered necessary to extraordinary reflection in its owner. So soon as a large column of smoke arose from this arrangement, the captain significantly held forth his hand towards his assistant. A small cord was produced from the pocket of the sergeant, and handed to the other. Now, indeed, appeared a moment of deep care in the refugee, who threw out vast puffs of smoke until nearly all of his head was obscured, and looked around the building with an anxious and inquisitive eye. At length he removed the pipe, and inhaling a draught of pure air, returned it to its *domicile*, and proceeded to business at once. There was a heavy piece of timber laid across the girths of the barn, but a little way from the southern door, which opened directly upon a full view of the river, as it stretched far away towards the bay of New York. Over this timber the refugee threw one end of the rope, and, regaining it, joined the two parts in his hand. A small and weak barrel that wanted a head, the staves of which were loose and at one end standing apart, was left on the floor, probably as useless to the owner. This was brought by the sergeant in obedience to a look from his officer, and placed beneath the beam. All of these arrangements were made with immoveable composure, and now seemed completed to the officer's perfect satisfaction.

"Come," he said coolly to the skinner, who, amazed with the preparations, had stood both a close and silent spectator of their progress. He obeyed—and it was not until he found his neck-cloth removed, and hat thrown aside, that he took the alarm. But he had so often resorted to a similar expedient to extort information or plunder, that he by no means felt the terror an unpractised man would have suffered, at these ominous movements. The rope was adjusted to his neck with the same coolness, that formed the characteristic of the whole movement, and a fragment of board being laid upon the barrel, he was ordered to mount it.

"But it may fall," said the skinner, for the first time beginning to tremble. "I will tell you any thing—even how to surprise our party at the Pond, without this trouble; and that is commanded by my own brother."

"I want no information," returned his executioner, (for such he now seemed really to be,) as he threw the rope repeatedly over the beam, first drawing it tight, so as to annoy the skinner a little, and then casting the end from him, far beyond the reach of any one.

"This is joking too far," cried the skinner, in a tone of remonstrance, and raising himself on his toes, with the vain hope of releasing himself from the cord by slipping his head through the

noose. But the caution and experience of the refugee had guarded against this escape.

“What did you with the horse you stole from me, rascal?” he cried, throwing out extraordinary columns of smoke, as he waited for a reply.

“He broke down in the chase,” replied the skinner quickly; “but I can tell you where one is to be found, that is worth him and his sire.”

“Liar! I will help meself when I want one—but you had better call upon God for aid, as your hour is short.” On concluding this consoling advice, he struck the barrel a violent blow with his heavy foot, and the slender staves flew in every direction, leaving the skinner whirling in the air. As his hands were unconfined, he threw them upwards, and held himself suspended by main strength.

“Come, captain,” he said coaxingly, a little huskiness creeping into his voice, and his knees beginning to shake with a slight tremor, “just end the joke—’tis enough to make a laugh, and my arms begin to tire—indeed I can’t hold on much longer.”

“Harkee, Mr Pedlar,” said the refugee, in a voice that would not be denied, “I want not your company. Through that door lies your road—march!—offer to touch that dog, and you’ll swing in his place, if twenty sir Henrys wanted your services.” So saying, he retired to the road with the sergeant, as the pedlar precipitately retreated down the bank.

Birch went no farther than a bush that opportunely offered itself as a skreen to conceal his person, while he yielded to an unconquerable desire to witness what would be the termination of this extraordinary scene.

Left thus alone, the skinner began to throw fearful glances around, to espy the hiding places of his tormentors. For the first time, the horrid idea seemed to shoot through his brain, that something serious was intended by the Cow-Boy. He called entreatingly to be released, and made rapid and incoherent promises of important information, mingled with affected pleasantry at their conceit, which he could hardly admit to himself could mean any thing so dreadful as it seemed. But as he heard the tread of the horses moving on their course, and in vain looked around for human aid, violent tremblings seized his limbs, and his eyes began to start from his head with terror. He made a desperate effort to reach the beam, but too much exhausted with his previous exertions, he caught the rope in his teeth, in a vain effort to sever the cord, and fell to the whole length of his arms. Here his cries were turned into shrieks—

“Help—cut the rope—Captain!—Birch!—good pedlar—down with the Congress!—sergeant!—for God’s sake help—Hurrah for the king!—O God! O God! mercy—mercy—mercy—”

‘As his voice became suppressed, one of his hands endeavored to make its way between the rope and his neck, and partially succeeded, but the other fell quivering by his side. A convulsive shuddering passed over his whole frame, and he hung a hideous, livid corpse.

‘Birch continued gazing on this scene with a kind of infatuation, and at its close he placed his hands to his ears, rushing towards the highway; but still the cries for mercy rung through his brain, and it was many weeks before his memory ceased to dwell on the horrid event. The Cow-Boys rode steadily on their route, as if nothing had occurred, and the body was left swinging in the wind, until chance directed the footsteps of some straggler to the place.’

Such is our hasty epitome of the *Spy*;—a work, which, with numerous and great blemishes, has yet redeeming merits to give it a respectable station in the ranks of historical romance. We have no fondness for indiscriminate censure or praise; and we humbly trust, we shall never award that palm, which we should withhold from a foreign production, to the work of an American, merely because it is such. There is no compliment, in that unmeaning adulation, which has styled the author of the *Spy* the Scott of America; nor do we think public sentiment, in this part of the country, will bear out a pretension so extravagant. At any rate, for ourselves, we do not hesitate to say, that although uncommon powers are here exhibited, from which we have a right to augur yet better things, we have discerned nothing in this production which draws the writer a step nearer to the author of the *Waverley* novels, than it does to Shakspeare himself. His faults, however, are in general those of inexperience, and we fear we must add haste. Nothing but unpardonable haste can account for that sad huddling into confusion, towards the end, of a plot so well laid in the outset. And if we look more into detail, we find not unfrequent such gross negligences as making locks which were *black* in one place, p. 14; *auburn* in another, p. 65.; speaking of a house as lowering from the ‘*light of day*,’ p. 229, when it was just fired because the night was ‘*too dark to move in*,’ p. 226; or causing a gentleman to establish a *cigar-box*, instead of a cigar, in the corner of his mouth, ‘without the slightest interruption to discourse,’ p. 208; while loose and inelegant expressions, and even sentences of ungrammatical construction, are more frequent than they could have been with the ordinary care of

an ordinary writer. We hope these indications of haste do not proceed from the pitiful ambition of feeding the compositor with sheets, on which the ink is scarce dry. That may answer for the veteran of established reputation—at least ‘for the nonce;’ but it is the last point in which we desire to trace a resemblance between our young writers and the author of *Waverley*.

The particular talent of our author seems to lie in describing action and hitting off the humors of low life. Wherever there is something to be done, he sets about doing it with his whole soul; the reader’s attention is chained to the event; every other interest is absorbed in the deed, which is exhibited with a boldness of outline and vividness of coloring, proportioned to its importance in itself, or in its results. The flight, the hot pursuit, the charge, the victory, pass before you with the rapidity, and the distinctness too, of the forked lightning which plays in the summer cloud; and the reader, not less than the writer, is irresistibly borne on by the subject. On the other hand is character to be developed, where character is most strongly marked, not in the heroes and the heroines, but the scene-shifters of life, the vulgar bustling beings, who perform its ordinary functions, who make the strong shadow and the sharp light, which education and refinement soften away, we are brought to hear a spirited dialogue, replete with comic humor, rich with the direct language of untutored men, which displays clearly the moral peculiarities of the speakers, and proves the writer to possess, and to have employed, the talent of observing others, and of subtracting useful or striking traits from the real characters of life.—These are high gifts—the highest in the writer of fiction of a secondary rank. They are also (in a far more exalted degree, however, than with our author) the characteristics of the great Scottish antiquary; but then to these are added in him other qualities of extraordinary perfection, which our author either does not possess, or possesses in a far humbler degree.

The author of the *Spy* has not shown himself to be pre-eminently endowed with the power of moving the softer affections. That mysterious touch, which can open the secret sources of passion, and dissolve the heart in tears, and without which the highest order of excellence in fictitious composition cannot be attained, we do not say that he has not the mastery

of, but he has not yet proved to us that he has. The close of the trial scene, the pedlar's short description of the terrors of a lonely and ignominious death, which we have quoted above, and one of the early interviews between Frances and Dunwoodie, are the only instances which occur to us, in which he has exhibited much pathos; and these are not of the first rate. Neither has our author betrayed that exquisite sensibility to the beauties of nature, which so commonly belongs to the poetic mind. There is a vast field of novelty open in our country, for this species of descriptive writing. Our author has not neglected to enter upon it;—but though his descriptions of natural scenery contain nothing that is not American, and are in fact good, yet they exhibit only the most obvious peculiarities of nature in this western world, with not a mark of that deep moral feeling, which weds the soul to beauty wherever it exists, and breathes its own freshness and fragrance over all that it creates. A delicate and discriminating taste, the result only of high cultivation, does not seem to be among the characteristics of this writer, and we trust he may not think it beneath him, to devote himself to the refinement of a power, which diffuses such an inexpressible charm over the productions of genius, and without which the invention, which can feed the appetite with perpetual novelty, and the imagination which can electrify the mind, may disgust as often as they please. It is true we are seldom shocked by gross violations of this principle, except in the mistaken view of the refinements of artificial and polished life, which have been already noticed; but harmony and smoothness are wanting throughout the whole. Of this we cannot be expected to give an illustration, unless the reader should find one in the citations already made; but as an instance of particularly bad taste we would specify, amongst many that might be adduced, the description of the highway, which ‘ran boldly to the base of a barrier that would frighten a spirit less adventurous, and regardless of danger and difficulties kept its undeviating way until the summit was gained, when, rioting for a moment in victory, it as daringly plunged into the opposite vale, and resumed its meandering and sloth.’ This was doubtless meant for fine description;—but the personification of a turnpike is about as violent an appeal to the imagination as can well be made. The inventive faculty, that, which if it be not genius is at least its chief characteristic, we cannot but think our author

possesses in an eminent degree; and we have rather to complain of that want of good taste, which has crowded so much of violent action into so small a space, than of paucity of incident, or monotony of style. At the same time that we cannot but remark again upon that gross negligence, which has produced the effect of poverty; as, for instance, two miraculous escapes of the pedlar, effected in precisely the same way; two burnings, that of the pedlar's hut, and that of the Wharton mansion, closely succeeding each other; and the horror of encountering the gallows erected for his execution, first inflicted upon Wharton himself, and then upon Frances.

One capital defect, which remains to be considered, is that excessive minuteness which leaves nothing for the imagination to supply. The enumeration of little unimportant facts—mere necessary consequences—and full length descriptions of the exact tone, look, and gesture, with which something, or nothing, is uttered, the precise graduation of this or that emotion, and nice calculations upon the quantum of scorn or of smile exhibited on every trifling occasion, are prodigious *weakeners* of style, and when once noticed by the reader, produce a ludicrous effect. Upon such a point a single illustration is worth a volume of commentary, and the following specimen presents itself literally at a single glance. It is from a short conversation (not so witty by the way as the author intended) between Capt. Lawton and Mason, his lieutenant, p. 134, 135. 'The thought makes my head ache, replied the other, *shrugging up his shoulders*.'—'I have much reason to be obliged to the captain, said Mason, *drily*.'—'I'll not feign anger with you, returned the captain, *good humoredly*.'—'I believe both of us will be spared &c. observed Mason, *kindly*.' 'From my soul I hope so, exclaimed Lawton, *fervently*.'—'I thought they were going the wrong way, answered the subaltern, *drily*.'—'It was either your fall &c. returned the *waggish* subaltern, *gravely*.'—'Ay, but he managed &c. continued Mason, *coolly*.' 'You slept through it all, said Mason, *laconically*.'—'Yes, returned the other *with a sigh*.'—Yes, yes, said the captain, *quickly*,'—and so on to the end of *all* the chapters. A species of characterising, that reminds one of the dauber in Don Quixote, who wrote under his portrait, *this is a cock!*—Epithets and adverbs are the wretched expedients of a lame artist, who knows not how to do that which, to say the truth,

our author does full well—make his characters speak for themselves, and exhibit their qualities by word and deed. His portraits are spirited and for the most part, we doubt not, striking likenesses. Cæsar, in particular, whom we are unromantic enough to esteem the true hero of the piece, and who is certainly a pattern for all ‘people of color,’ is not only a real African, but if any of our readers doubt it, we can point out the very person who sat for the picture. Sergeant Hollister, overflowing with piety and valor, is a man whom we are all well acquainted with. The calculating Katy Haines we meet every day of our lives;—and the speculator upon the land and the misfortunes of others we may not look far to recognize. These are all original sketchings, done with a masterly hand, and serve strongly to illustrate the remarks which we made in the beginning of our article, upon the wide scope, which our country affords for the exercise of this kind of talent.* Betty Flanagan, though neither native nor new, is hardly inferior to either of the others; and Lawton, if he would not insist upon setting himself up for a finished gentleman, and were a little less ambitious of being thought a comical fellow withal, would be a trooper after our own hearts. Even Dunwoodie, though by no means the man our author took him to be, is precisely such a vaporish hero as we have seen strutting in regimentals many a day; and his mistress, who loves him far better than he deserves, keeping the courtship a little too much on her own side, is, or at least was, before she caught the Singleton infection, a pretty little miniature of an enthusiastic, warmhearted heroine. Of the insignificants, old Wharton and Miss Peyton are excellent pictures, true to the life; and we think we may add Sarah to the list, before she goes mad; after that calamity, though she sets out in her new character well enough, she carries the joke a little too far. And this reminds us of Dr Sitgreaves, whom it is a wonder we had not thought of before. The surgeon of the horse has many excellent points of humor about him. The

* When those remarks were prepared for the press, we had not read the *New England Tale*, a beautiful little picture of native scenery and manners, composed with exquisite delicacy of taste, and great strength of talent. Had we seen this, we should not have needed a stronger confirmation of our opinion respecting the abundance of original character we can supply to the domestic tale.—If rumor has rightly attributed this excellent production to a female pen, we may with far greater confidence boast of a *religious* Edgeworth in our land, than of a wonder-working Scott.

billet, for instance, which he indites to his assistant, when Cæsar is despatched on an eight mile ride, expressly for a certain ring, which was to unite the destinies of Sarah and Wellmere, and in which the ring is the very last thing mentioned, a mere *obiter dictum*, after divers instructions which concerned the health of the regiment, rather than the happiness of the bridal array; his rescuing a good *subject* from the flames of the Wharton dwelling, at the imminent hazard of his life; and his remonstrances, before we become tired of them, against the unscientific cut of Lawton and his men, so fatal to human life and the art of surgery, are certainly comic. But Dr Sitgreaves after all is a mere caricature, and, we speak it with all due deference to the 'lights of science,' considerably overdone. A late foreign journal has exclaimed loudly against the whole system of *bores*—even the great Erymanthian bores—(if we may follow Cicero in quoting the pun of the Agrigentines) of the writer of the Waverley novels. The remarks are certainly just, but we are not prepared to go to the full length of the conclusion that would suddenly strike out of existence so prodigious a monster, as Dominie Sampson and others of his kind—'all my pretty chickens and their dam—at one fell swoop,' merely because they are monsters, certainly very harmless, and infinitely amusing in their way. But then they should be properly kept up—let out now and then seasonably;—whereas our friend, Dr Sitgreaves has no sort of tact at perceiving when he is wanted, and coming in at all hours without knocking, makes us laugh at his professional ignorance rather than his simplicity, in discoursing so seriously as he does on the difficulties of replacing a shattered brain, or reuniting a severed artery, to any purpose of animal life. Unseasonable jokes, and a constant repetition of the same, are rather a fault of our author's. Thus poor Cæsar's teeth are made to chatter every ten pages, till we wonder that a single stump is left in his head, p. 92. 98. 155. 161. &c. Birch is a grand conception, but imperfectly executed. His movements are sometimes too rapid for mere human agency, as where he sets Hollister and his party in motion, and in almost the same time that Cæsar on horseback, and at full speed, could travel with the marriage ring from the 'four corners' to the 'Locusts,' he performs the same journey on foot, and arrives in time to interrupt the ceremonies. His warnings of danger are sometimes a little too ambiguous to

warrant the effects they produce, such as ‘the moon will not rise till after midnight—a fit time for deeds of darkness.’ He often usurps a dignity which hardly belongs to him, and then again relapses into a degree of vulgarity quite inconsistent with his late dignity, and needless for any purpose of deception. His constant allusions to *him*, who alone knew him, but ill agree with his habitual caution; and the useless tricks that he plays, merely to astonish the natives, are often quite unaccountable; as where he calls to Dunwoodie to ‘stand or die;’ informs him that he wants nothing but his good opinion (which he certainly took a novel way of securing;) warns him of some impending danger without explaining what; and finally concludes with the very superfluous manœuvre of firing his musket in the air, throwing it at the feet of Dunwoodie, and vanishing *in fumo*.

But we must put a period to remarks which have already swelled our article to unlooked for dimensions. We have to thank our author for having demonstrated so entirely to our satisfaction, that an admirable topic for the romantic historian has grown out of the American Revolution; although we still think it a less prolific source than our earlier history. If he has not done all that man could do, he has at least exhibited powers from which we have every thing to hope. The *Spy* of the Neutral Ground is not the production of an ordinary mind, and we will not presume to set limits to that capacity of improvement, which the author of *Precaution* has evinced in this second attempt. He has the high praise, and will have, we may add, the future glory, of having struck into a new path—of having opened a mine of exhaustless wealth—in a word, he has laid the foundations of American romance, and is really the first who has deserved the appellation of a distinguished American novel writer. Brown, who is beginning to attain a merited distinction abroad as well as at home, although his scenes are laid in America, cannot be said with truth to have produced an American novel. So far from exhibiting any thing of our native character and manners, his agents are not beings of this world; but those dark monsters of the imagination, which the will of the master may conjure up with an equal horror in the shadows of an American forest, or amidst the gloom of long galleries and vaulted aisles. His works have nothing but American topography about them. We recognize the names of places that are familiar to us and

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nothing more. Not even his natural scenery, wild, romantic, sublime, possibly a true copy of the particular spots it represents, can be said to possess the peculiar characteristics of America; and with him the aboriginal savage moves to his fell purpose, not as the real warrior of the wilderness, but a mere fiendlike instrument of death.—The graceful and humorous author of *Knickerbocker* and the *Sketch Book*, we regret to say, has not yet permitted us to view him threading the mazes of romance; and when we have named these, we know not who else there is to enter into competition with our author for the palm as an American novelist. We hope to hear from him again—not too soon. We do not exactly.

‘drop in unwilling ears

This saving counsel—keep your piece *nine years*,’

But we protest most seriously against modern rapidity of production; and really beg that he will be so good (for it is a virtue now a days,) as just to write his book before he prints it; and it would do no harm if he were to read it over once into the bargain.

ERRATA.

Page 71. 12th l. from bot. for ‘voluminous,’ read ‘numerous.’

— 72. 6th l. ——— — ‘Mr Bacon Wood,’ read ‘Mr Baron Wood.’